

Methinks the pundit-acolyte doth protest too much

A brief response to Mark Sleboda's Duginist obfuscations on Facebook

N. Wahid Azal © 2016

On Thursday, 11 February 2016, only twenty-four hours following the publication of my **Counterpunch** piece, "*Dugin's Occult Fascism and the Hijacking of Left Anti-imperialism and Muslim Anti-Salafism*,"¹ RT (Russia Today) pundit and American expat Duginist Mark Sleboda contacted me in email wishing to set me straight and correct my "misinterpretation of Dugin." I politely replied to him with a friendly but somewhat long email, in one instance quoting directly from Dugin himself, detailing my reasons why I believe he (i.e. Sleboda) was mistaken and that my criticism of Dugin rests on much firmer foundations than what Sleboda cares to admit.² He did not reply. Sleboda had earlier also sent me a Facebook friend request on the very same day, which I graciously accepted after sending my email response to him.

It should be noted here that, together with Canadian Michael Miller, Mark Sleboda is one of the two translators for Alexander Dugin's *The Fourth Political Theory* which is published by Arktos (London: 2012). Mark Sleboda is also a faculty member at Moscow State University, being a senior lecturer and researcher in international relations and security over there.³

Now, on Monday, 17 February 2016, a relatively heated discussion on Sleboda's Facebook wall took place between myself and Sleboda over a Foreign Policy article that he had posted: a conversation quite telling on numerous issues and on numerous levels.⁴ For the purposes of accuracy and historical posterity, I have uploaded two separate PDFs of this conversation online and with two separate hosting spaces.⁵

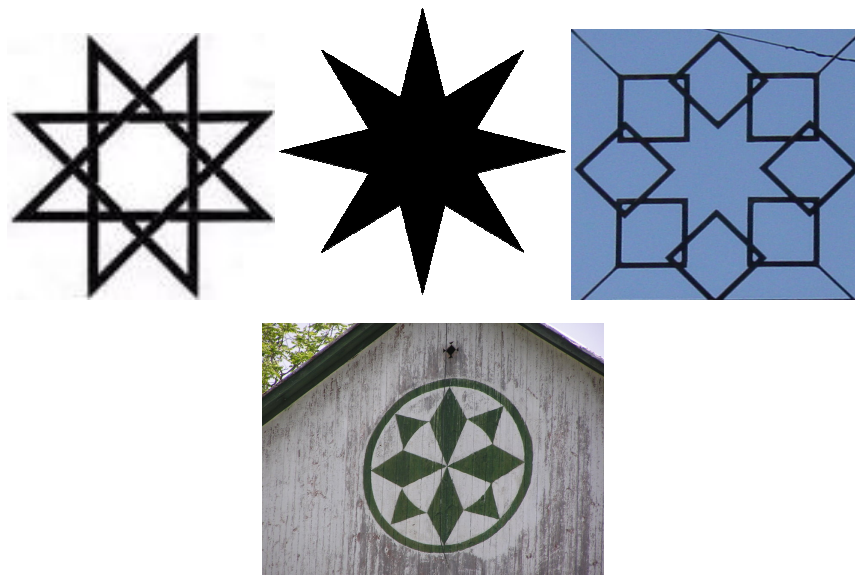
The issue that I specifically wish to address here now is the following assertion made by Sleboda in that discussion:

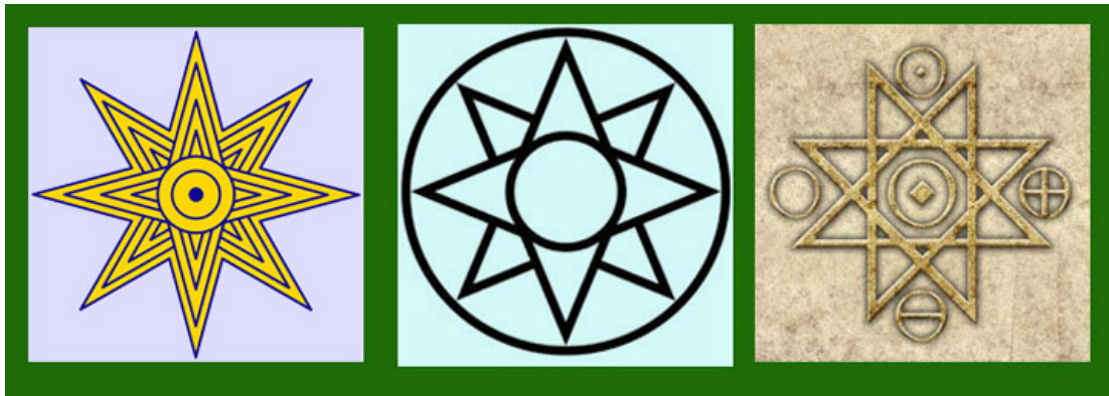
 **Mark Sleboda** And btw fyi the Eurasian 8 pointed star - is the Orthodox eight-pointed star, the Star of Redemption or Regeneration and represents baptism. Eight is traditionally the number of regeneration, and thus many Orthodox baptismal fonts have an octagonal base. It is a symbol of the rebirth of Russia in Eurasia through the fires of the Horde, rather than Europe, like the phoenix from the ashes.

You could at least ask before making ill-informed hit pieces based on internet slander and tin-foil conspiracy theories.

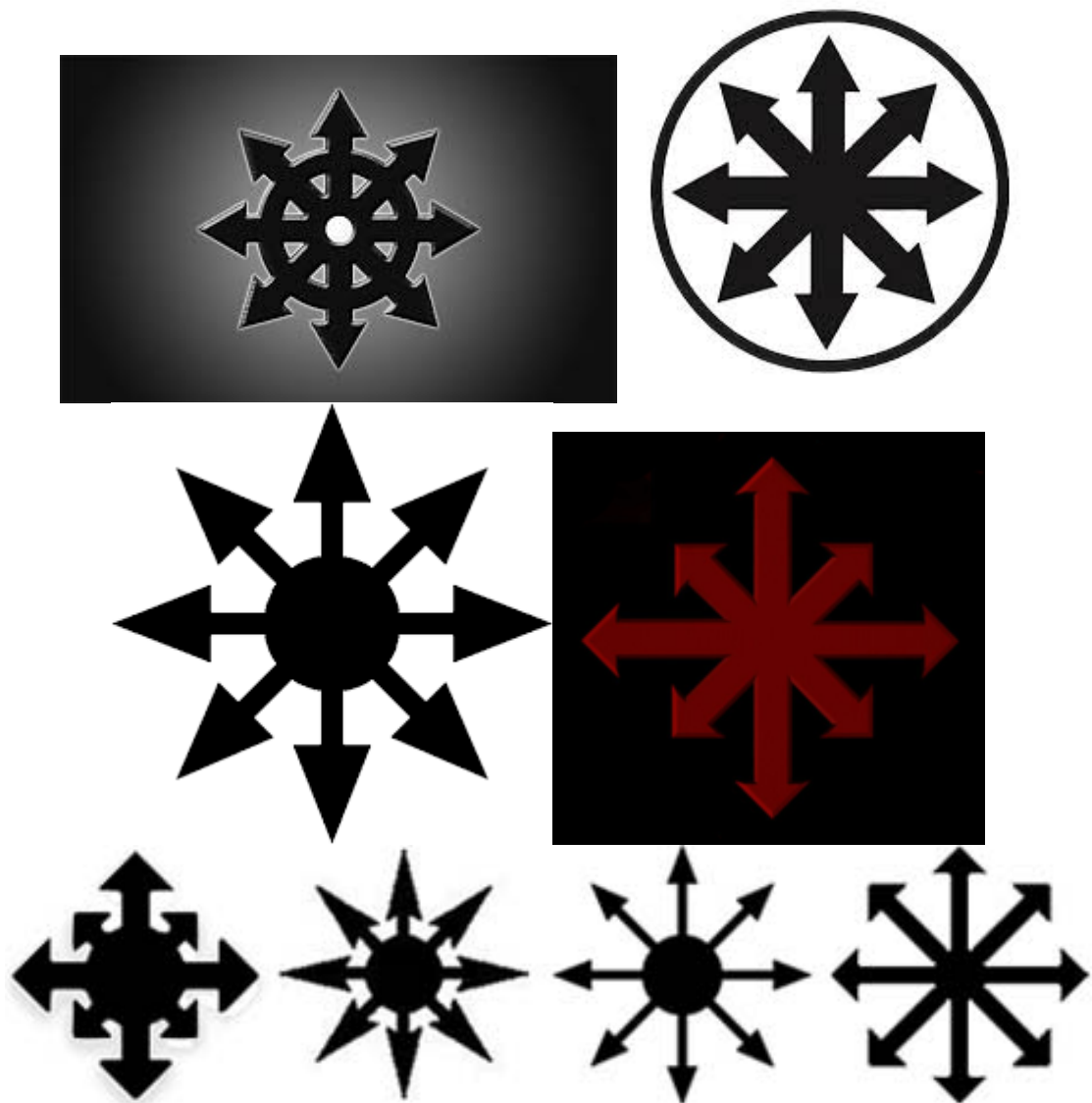
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First, it should be noted that Sleboda is verbatim quoting the website **ReligionFacts** for his assertion above.⁶ Now, Sleboda's claim that the Eurasian eight pointed star is the Orthodox Christian eight-pointed star, and so not the Chaos Star or Chaosphere, rests merely upon his own present contention. However, my claim that it is actually the Chaos Star with no legitimate connection to any Orthodox Christian symbology is not a conspiracy theory because the fact can be easily demonstrated with graphic evidence. The eight-pointed Star of Redemption or Regeneration is usually one of the following or a variation thereof:

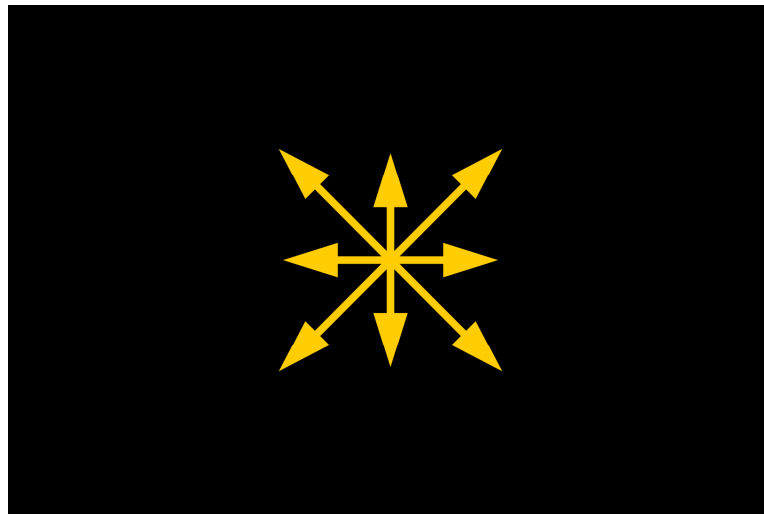




In contrast, the Chaos Star or Chaosphere symbol and its variations are the following:



And now for Dugin's Eurasian thunderbolt flag:



Unless the Duginists wish to assert that Michael Moorcock and the British Chaos magicians of the '70s-'80s derived their symbology from specifically Orthodox Christian sources (an interesting proposition nonetheless, but one which would require critical historical and analytical evidence), the fact of the matter is that the Duginist symbol bears a direct resemblance in all of its features to the Chaos Star and not to the Orthodox Christian Star of Redemption or Regeneration as Sleboda (verbatim quoting an online source) asserts.

Moreover, in an interview conducted by Robert Schmadtke with prominent Serbian Euriasianist/Duginist Boris Nad, the interviewer (a Duginist himself) at one point outright states, "*The Fourth Political Theory (4PT) movement also uses the Chaos Star to identify with. As far as I know, that star belongs to chaos magic, something, which got its origin in and is practiced by small groups in North Britain and elsewhere,*" to which Nad responds by saying, "*...It is the morning star and evening star, a guide and point of orientation. It is the star of Lucifer, Ishtar and Venus, and a powerful symbol of "chaos magic"...*"⁷ Obviously the Chaos magick origins of this symbol is publicly acknowledged by the Duginists themselves, so then why the dissimulations, contortions and obfuscations by Sleboda when publicly called on it by a non-

Duginist? Is it possible that the Duginists are worried about the implications of their chosen symbology being highlighted and underscored among some of the traditional religious groups and cultures they are currently actively recruiting among, say Shi'i Muslim Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis and Lebanese or Eastern European Orthodox Christians? In addition, the explicitly Thelemic-Chaos bases of Duginist symbology has likewise been pointed out in print by Anton Shekhovstov, apparently a former Duginist himself.⁸ Finally, Appendix II of very same *The Fourth Political Theory* – which I maintain is the core thesis of the whole book and thus the entire underlying philosophical thrust of Duginism from start to finish – is entitled “The Metaphysics of Chaos,” i.e. the very same book that Mark Sleboda himself translated. As such, whatever his present commitments, credulity is literally pushed to the breaking point with any reasonable person if one were to take Mark Sleboda at his word.

والله اعلم

¹ 10 February 2016, see <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/10/dugins-occult-fascism-and-the-hijacking-of-left-anti-imperialism-and-muslim-anti-salafism/> (retrieved 17 February 2016).

² I quote now, first, Sleboda's email and then followed by my response:

From: **Mark Sleboda**

Date: Thu, Feb 11, 2016 at 7:00 AM

Subject: Misinterpretation of Dugin

Wahid,

I am writing to you in regards to your recent article in Counterpunch on Alexandr Dugin. I don't have the time or inclination to engage in an acrimonious and public line-by-line rebuttal with you but would rather engage in an honest and frank exchange and conversation about it. (my skype handle is camaeljax and I'm on Moscow time). I believe you are operating from severely ill-informed assumptions, internet gossip, and conspiracy theory rather than what could be an honest critique and ideological differences from a more orthodox Left position (I myself previously came to Eurasianism from a Green-Left perspective).

I worked closely with Dugin for two years at Moscow State University where I taught, before, mostly

amicably, parting ways on differences of methodology and associations. Very little of your article is accurate, I am afraid to say - and I mean that in as constructive a way as possible.

Do let me know if you are interested in discussing it, and getting a frank inside perspective on who and what Dugin is - and what he isn't.

Best regards,

Mark Sleboda

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From: **N.W. Azal**

Date: Thu, Feb 11, 2016 at 1:32 PM

Subject: Re: Misinterpretation of Dugin

Dear Mark Sleboda, greetings

It was an unexpected pleasure to hear from you. Thank you for taking the time to read the article and respond. I confess to being a big fan of yours and have followed your erudite geopolitical commentary and analysis on RT and elsewhere for years now.

My greater perspective on the issues is eclectic, so I somewhat share that kind of trajectory with Dugin himself. I am a practicing and committed Twelver Shi'i Sufi Muslim and stand primarily with the Islamic Republic of Iran and its interests. I am also moderately a Traditionalist -- more Guenonian, for obvious reasons, than Evolian (Schuon, in my view, was an out and out fake and phony so I do not even consider him a genuine Traditionalist) -- although I also regularly argue quite a fair bit with many of the assumptions held by the neo-Trad. Henry Corbin, although strictly not a Traditionalist, is the one figure in the West during the 20th century who has influenced my approach to religion and spirituality -- and especially the religion and spirituality my own Iranian people -- more than any other figure. That man was also single handedly responsible for bringing me back to Islam in my late teens. Politically I stand with the anti-imperialist Left, consider myself an economic socialist, although I am not strictly a Marxist but have nevertheless benefited from salient features of Marxian analyses. Franz Fanon is extremely important to me as are some key thinkers among the Depth Ecology crowd (albeit I also think this particular crowd gets a lot of details wrong about many things as well). The late Ayatollah Khomeini as well as the late Jalal Al-e Ahmad are also two key spiritual and intellectual figures in my personal ideological pantheon.

Generally speaking, I stand with Russia and Putin, and I am a well wisher of Russia, its people and its future, and pray that this Atlanticist Beast, which is daily plunging our world into greater and greater chaos, gets its final comeuppance so that we can leave a better world, at least, for our children even [if] we don't get to see that better world ourselves.

Now, just for your information: until early 2015, I was quite happy and willing to give Dugin and the people around him the benefit of the doubt. I read whatever was available in English. I agreed with many of Dugin's positions on assorted issues; disagreed with many more. Yet at that point everything was merely on a theoretical level. Through Joaquin Flores -- for whose CSS, you will note, I contributed 3 articles during 2014 -- my wife and I befriended Manuel Ochsenreiter and his lovely

wife Narine Setrakian in Berlin, who we invited to our home for dinner several times during the course of that year. Both Manuel and Narine are lovely, lovely people, and my wife and I were heartbroken over the events that transpired as of Charlie Hebdo and extended into April of last year that forced us to have to let both Manuel and Narine go as friends.

I was also a member of the facebook New Resistance group for most of 2014 until February 2015 when I left the group in protest over the manner in which a Spanish Syrian friend of mine was treated by the listowner, James Porrazzo, and the crowd over there. Both my friend and I were utterly disgusted, not to mention flabbergasted, at the brazen and indiscriminate racism and Islamophobia (which does not distinguish between Salafists and other Muslims) regularly articulated on that list by an assortment of people, but especially by Porrazzo. The uncritical support for PEGIDA by this crowd -- and their adamant refusal to distinguish most average Muslims in Germany from the Salafist loons -- was the proverbial straw that broke the camels back.

That said, matters came to a head in April 2015 on CSS where I queried publicly the relationship of the editor of Dugin's English publisher Arktos, i.e. John Morgan, with the Ukrainian junta -- and Svoboda and the Right Sector specifically -- during Euromaidan, because I found it rather bizarre that Dugin's English publisher had openly cavorted with these people. I am also convinced that John Morgan personally is working for some Beltway think-tank or some such. Both Joaquin Flores and Nina Kouprianova initially supported me. Flores outright said to Morgan that he was a "Gladio operative." I have the comments and threads all saved.

However, this changed immediately when it appears James Porrazzo got his proverbial marching orders and came out publicly attacking myself and my wife on CSS in the most vile, racist terms. Then he privately threatened my wife and myself in private message. Given James Porrazzo's history and background, I did not take any chances, and so you will be happy to note that there is a police and public prosecutors file over the incident here in Germany. As such should Mr Porrazzo ever deign to set foot in Europe, or Germany specifically, he will be arrested on the spot and either incarcerated, deported or both, especially given the overtly antisemitic slurs that he both privately and publicly hurled my way, which as you know is a hate-crime in Germany. Immediately afterwards, this NR crowd launched a personal smear campaign against me, setting up fake fan pages, constantly sending harassing messages, etc.

So if anything, it was the behavior of this crowd itself that first raised all my flags. These are the kind of people Dugin surrounds himself with and who are his proverbial enforcers on social media, so there is nothing you can say to me to dissuade me on this angle, at least, when I have my own personal experience to go on. This may not be how you behave, since I believe you to be a cultivated gentleman, but this is the way people like James Porrazzo and those around him behave -- and they have a long history of it elsewhere with other people as well. Then there is Matthew Heimbach and his Traditionalist Youth Network cabal who are another kettle of fish, and who Dugin has never actually denounced. Heimbach and his group are unashamed racist, white supremacist-white separatist Islamophobes. Do you disagree?

Now, as for the article and my points of departure: Regarding the fact that Dugin's true ideological motivator is in fact Aleister Crowley and Chaos magic, I don't believe that even you yourself may be aware of the fact or of the forces animating Dugin's thinking on these issues. That said, my primary

research area is esotericism and the occult. I specialize in that of the Islamic world's specifically. Nevertheless I know my stuff about the Western occult and esoteric traditions as well, and am a personal friend to numerous people working in this area in the academy. Before his untimely passing in 2012, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (who wrote study after study on the Nazi occult) was a regular correspondent over email. I also happen to be an initiate as well going on 23 years now so I know what such symbols mean and how to decode them. Dugin's Eurasian "thunderbolt" flag is indeed a bow to Chaos magic and its underlying philosophy, and as such the main thesis of his Fourth Position explicitly echoes such influences. There is nothing anyone can say to convince me otherwise because these symbols speak for themselves, and so the political theory (whatever levels of intellectual dissimulation are employed to conceal the fact) is fundamentally animated by it. Now, one explanation I would like from someone as eminent as yourself (who was once so close to Dugin), is why he chose this specific symbol and not something else? Why did he choose a symbol whose locus of origin is within the specific world of British occultism? Not Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Not even Russian nationalism. But Chaos magic! Indeed while men may lie; symbols do not.

Then there is Heidegger. Here are Dugin's own words:

...Heidegger is not only a great philosopher, on par with other greats, but, in fact, the greatest of them all. He occupies the place of the last prophet, concludes the development of the first stage of philosophy (from Anaximander to Nietzsche), and serves as the transition, the bridge to a new philosophy, which he only anticipates in his works. In that case, Heidegger is an eschatological figure, the final interpreter and clarifier of the most profound and enigmatic subjects in world philosophy, and the creator of a radically new way of thinking. As a result, we can view him as a figure in a religious pantheon, as an "envoy of Being itself", a herald and organizer of the greatest event... Alexandr Dugin, **Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning**, Arktos, 2014: 18.

Unless Nina has mistranslated such passages and others in the book, which I don't believe is the case, this is Dugin's core point of departure regarding Heidegger. To any genuine Traditionalist of any persuasion, this sounds like creepy, errant nonsense, not to mention a bow to the Counter-Tradition. He also attacks Evola's critique of Heidegger several times from *Ride the Tiger* but without providing a single convincing or coherent argument. So I am not misinterpreting Dugin on that score one bit. These are his own words and his own positions.

Now, it is one thing to start with Heidegger and then go beyond him as my hero Henry Corbin did (Corbin was, after all, Heidegger's first French translator). However, it is quite another thing to turn Heidegger into an "eschatological figure" and "an envoy of Being." To any genuine Christian (especially an Orthodox Christian), let alone a Muslim, this smacks of outright, unequivocal theological heresy, let alone to Traditionalists who will look upon such statements as yet another demonstration of the arrogance of counter-traditional forces masquerading themselves as Traditionalists in order to subvert it. You will also note that both Guenon and Evola also repeatedly warned about those subversive forces of the counter- and anti-tradition attempting to infiltrate themselves in order to further corrupt the Tradition. Evola's chapter 13 "The Occult War" in *Men Among the Ruins* is all about this. As such when Dugin brazenly says such things as above about Heidegger, how is one supposed to interpret them in any other way? What other manner is Dugin supposed to be taken? And why is Heidegger more important to Dugin when discussing ontology than, say, Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Eriugena, Meister Eckhart, Gemisthus Plethon or any number of the sophisticated

Neoplatonists inhabiting the greater constellation of the Orthodox Christian tradition? But Heidegger?! Come on. This is not Traditionalism by a long shot and so Dugin is not a Traditionalist.

Next, there is no question that Dugin's networks in social media are attempting to recruit among the left and among anti-Salafist Muslims. After all I was once myself a target for such recruitment until events in January-April 2015 made me disposal to Porrazzo/Flores and the crowd around them because I was asking uncomfortable, controversial questions.

I can keep going, but I will leave it here for the time being, because I know you are a busy person. That said, I would be happier to debate these and other salient points publicly with Dugin himself rather than the people around him. I understand he is in Iran at the moment for the commemoration of the 37th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. However, if you would kindly convey my request directly to Dugin himself, I would appreciate it.

Again, many thanks for contacting me directly. Please convey my best to your friends, colleagues and loved ones. Be well.

Warmest regards,
N. Wahid Azal

³ He held this position for MSU's the Centre for Conservative Studies. However, since Alexander Dugin's employment was terminated from MSU in 2014, it is not clear whether the Centre for Conservative Studies still exists or that Sleboda continues to hold the position for it at MSU.

⁴ Scott Radniz, "Europe's Extremists Are Not Putin's Fault," Foreign Policy, 15 February 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/13/europes-extremists-are-not-putins-fault/> (retrieved 17 February 2016).

⁵ <https://www.docdroid.net/8XmeVDs/ffffff.pdf.html> and <https://www.docdroid.net/cD5Czkn/1-mark-sleboda-but-butno-blameputin-pdf4544.pdf.html> (retrieved 17 February 2016); <https://www.scribd.com/doc/299545870/Azal-Sleboda1> and <https://www.scribd.com/doc/299545954/Azal-Sleboda2> (retrieved 17 February 2016); the hyperlink to the original post and its comments thread on Facebook is, http://www.facebook.com/gramsci/posts/10153674588104425?comment_id=10153675576889425&reply_comment_id=10153675669849425 (retrieved 17 February 2016).

⁶ <http://www.religionfacts.com/eight-point-star> (retrieved 17 February 2016).

⁷ <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/face-face-godgod> and <http://openrevolt.info/2014/05/24/boris-nad-interview/> (retrieved 17 February 2016).

⁸ See <http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/nationalism/shekhovtsov1.html> and https://www.academia.edu/197910/Is_Aleksandr_Dugin_a_Traditionalist_Neo-Eurasianism_and_Perennial_Philosophy (retrieved 17 February 2016).